



# Michigan's AmeriCorps Service Stories

SUMMER 2008

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## Russ Mawby Signature Service Project

The Russ Mawby Signature Service Project is an annual event hosted by the Michigan Community Service Commission. Each year AmeriCorps members from around the state join together for two days of training, teambuilding, and service. The event truly demonstrates the power of volunteers in action.

On June 11th and 12th, more than 250 members focused on

rejuvenating Crystal Estates, a neighborhood in Benton Harbor. Projects included landscaping, building sheds, constructing subfloors, framing, painting, and demolition.

"We thank Michigan's AmeriCorps for choosing Benton Harbor to host this year's Signature Service Project," said Mike Green, Executive Director of Harbor Habitat for Humanity.

"Their time and enthusiasm will jumpstart the Crystal Estates neighborhood. This unique service opportunity is another example of how Benton Harbor remains a 'City of Promise'."

The 2008 Project was a partnership between Michigan's AmeriCorps, Habitat for Humanity, Harbor Habitat for Humanity, and the Michigan Community Service Commission.

## Michigan's AmeriCorps Partnership

### TAKE A LOOK

**By: Raymond Murry**

Take a look at our lives  
See the world through our eyes  
Run the race in our shoes  
See all the great things we do  
Overcoming obstacles  
Carrying the heavy load  
Just to see a change  
And make the world a better place

We're getting things done  
One by one were taking care of our problems  
We're getting things done  
Coming together everyone puts forth effort  
We're getting things done  
Don't got time to waste  
Got the whole world to face  
We're getting things done



**Singing from the heart, Raymond Murry jumpstarted the Signature Service Project with his inspiring music.**

You wanna be the change  
Just open up your mouth and say

How can I make a difference?  
How can I be the change that I wanna see?

How can I make a difference?  
Make a way for the ones who come after me  
How can I make a difference?  
How can I be all I'm supposed to be?  
How can I make a difference?  
AmeriCorps

Now take a look at your life  
How does the world look through your eyes?  
I'm sure you see many issues  
But what do you do to make them right?  
Listen in case you didn't hear  
We all gotta work together  
If we wanna see  
This place get any better

Hear the song at:  
[www.myspace.com/raymurry](http://www.myspace.com/raymurry)

# Michigan Habitat's AmeriCorps



## HABITAT MEMBERS SHINE

*By: Jamie Cianfarani*

Members from Michigan Habitat's AmeriCorps had a chance to stand out with members from

around the state to help develop an inspirational community in Benton Harbor.

To create groups with a variety of skills, Michigan

Habitat's AmeriCorps members were split up into different groups. Many of the members were working on construction projects. Because our members had experience with these projects, they were propelled into leadership positions. They helped show groups how to get the job done correctly, efficiently, and in a timely fashion.

With the cooperation of all of the AmeriCorps members, and the local Benton Harbor

Habitat affiliate, we were able to make a big impact.

The project brought more than 200 AmeriCorps members together for two days of community service. Through this year's project, AmeriCorps members laid subfloors for four homes, constructed eight sheds, installed a fence around a retention pond, and cleared debris from a vacant lot in preparation for new Habitat homes.

Members joined together for construction projects such as building sheds.



AmeriCorps members helped build a subfloor.

## Neighborhood Youth Development

### A CHALLENGE

*By: Pamela VandenBurg*

The Signature Service Project truly tested me. It involved some of the most physically difficult work I have ever done and both days were over 80°. My team's job was to put in a subfloor in one of the homes. For the next two days, my team members spent hours hauling lumber.

Even though I was exhausted, my teammates kept me going. Their willingness to help and positive outlook never tired.

The Signature Service Project was not only a great opportunity to meet other Michigan's AmeriCorps members, but working with other members reminded me why I joined AmeriCorps. The final day of the build, I didn't

care about how hot it was or about how exhausted I was. As I worked, I stayed positive by thinking about the power AmeriCorps members have when they come together. We were building homes and a community of inspiration. I joined AmeriCorps to make a difference and I am proud to say I am an AmeriCorps member!



Members served for 2 full days in Benton Harbor.

## Huron Pines AmeriCorps

### THE FACES OF AMERICORPS

*By: Casey Ressler*

The Signature Service Project was an inspiring event. During those two hot summer days, AmeriCorps members met and motivated one another to help build a community. As I arrived, I saw over 250

members from around the state gathering to serve. Some members had construction experience while others had barely swung a hammer. But everyone had something to contribute. In our smaller service groups, we met members from other programs and shared our service stories.

Although we were tediously scraping paint off the side of a building, the conversation never tired. Together we accomplished the small task of removing paint but we realized we were part of something much larger- we were all giving back to Michigan communities and together, creating change.

# Downriver CARES AmeriCorps



## BUILDING SERVICE

By: Mark Coury

After graduating from college, I joined Downriver CARES AmeriCorps so I could make a difference. In my program, I spend Monday through Thursday working with first time juvenile offenders. On Fridays, members spend the day in the community participating in a service project such as volunteering in a soup kitchen. At first, the Signature Service Project appeared to be a typical Habitat project. However, the 2 days in Benton

Harbor were far from ordinary.

As a wide-ranging and multifaceted group, AmeriCorps is always able to surprise me. With over 40 years in age difference between the youngest and oldest members in our program, Downriver CARES is the perfect example of the diversity in AmeriCorps. We come from many different backgrounds and experiences, but everyone is able to contribute. The project proved to be a larger version of this, with hundreds of AmeriCorps members working together and striving



**Members efforts made the project a success.**

towards a larger goal. Although I had done Habitat work before, I had never seen such a diverse group working together as a unified entity to "Get Things Done."

# Char-Em ISD AmeriCorps

## FULFILLING A DREAM

By: Yvonne LeTourneau

In Benton Harbor, I was on the "Demo" crew. I was responsible for helping tear down the inside of a house from the 1920s. I had never done anything like this. Plaster, lathe board, and rusty nails all had to be removed down a narrow flight of stairs to the dumpster out

back. Everyone worked so hard, and did what they could. It was great to be a part of such an efficient system. Some members crawled to the roof to dismantle a chimney. An older member, who was not able to carry heavy loads, accomplished the tedious task of knocking the mortar off bricks from the chimney. Everyone fed off of each other's hard work and energy.

A man from the church next door stopped by and was amazed by our progress. He finally felt it would be possible to transform the house into a community meeting place. He had experienced some doubt prior to the AmeriCorps project. However, our hard work helped him see that the dream of completing Crystal Estates was finally coming true.

*"Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul.*

*Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal."*

**- Pamela Vaull Starr**

# MI Environmental Stewardship AmeriCorps

## NEW BEGINNINGS

By: Aistis Tumas

Meeting the future homeowners of the Crystal Estates homes was the highlight of the Signature Service Project. I was delighted to see the homeowners were present and spoke to our group. They reawakened the spirit of service in us and I felt they were really touched by our help as well.

At first, I wasn't sure if our help would have much of an impact. Our members didn't have much experience with construction so we were hesitant to begin building. However, with the future residents by our side, we learned quickly. It

was an inspiring situation to be helping someone build their dream. It is a project I'll never forget.



**Building the Crystal Estates community is an ongoing Habitat project.**



# MPCA Community HealthCorps



A future home in the community of Crystal Estates.

## BUILDING FUTURES

**By: Joy Evans**

I've volunteered in many different capacities over the last 20 years and none have been as inspirational as the Russ Mawby Service Project in Benton Harbor. Having the opportunity to donate a moment of my life to positively affect the future of others is a gift from God that is often overlooked.

I saw a great chance to take

part in making a difference in the lives of at least ten children who just got a hand-up, decreasing their chances of becoming adults who need a handout. These dwellings are the manifestation of dreams yet to be filled.

For these families these homes represent hope, this foundation supports faith, the walls surround them with love, each stud symbolizes stability.

Children of homeowners are 25% more likely to graduate

from high school and 116% more likely to graduate from college than the children of renters.

We were able to lend a hand to build a community that will end up being 21 homes, and then likely they will be occupied by families with children.

How's that for making a difference?

Signature Service Project '08 was an empowering event that has inspired my life.

## Smart Choice Project



Tanisha Brooks and Paul Jedele emcee the kickoff.

## SERVING TOGETHER

**By: Kyna King**

The Signature Service Project was a great experience for the Smart Choice Project members. We all had the chance to participate in different ways.

One of our members helped emcee during the kickoff. It was encouraging to see her

up there smiling and getting so many AmeriCorps members fired up.

The best part for me was meeting the people who would be moving into the Habitat homes and serving together as a team. The fellowship we were blessed to have with other members and volunteers was a remarkable experience.

The Russ Mawby Project is a

tradition we hope will continue and prosper throughout Michigan's communities.

It really made me proud that I decided to become an AmeriCorps member and volunteer my time to try and make this world a better place to live. My name is Kyna King I'm an AmeriCorps Member Getting Things Done!

## AmeriCorps Alums

### PROUD TO STILL BE SERVING

**By: Laura Schleede**

When I was serving with AmeriCorps, the annual Russ Mawby Signature Service Project was one of my favorite events. I loved the opportunity to join hundreds of other members in two days

of direct service. Each time I participated, I learned a new skill, whether it was putting up siding, helping to plant landscaping, learning to build a shed or helping my group feel connected as a team. We not only accomplished a lot during each project, but we also had a lot of fun!

This year I had the opportunity to serve as an AmeriCorps Alum and I am thrilled to still be a part of an incredible service movement. Even though my service as a AmeriCorps member has ended, the ability to be part of "getting things done" continues as an AmeriCorps alum!



[www.americorpsalums.org](http://www.americorpsalums.org)

# Special Thanks to Russ Mawby

## A MAN OF DEDICATION

Dr. Russell G. Mawby is chair emeritus and trustee of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He served as a program officer, vice president, and CEO and chair of the Foundation during his 36-year tenure. A former professor at Michigan State University, he later served as a member of the MSU Board of Trustees, which he chaired in 1995.

Dr. Mawby was appointed to the Lieutenant Governor's Children's Commission from 1995 to 1996 and the State Officers Compensation Commission from 1996 to 1998. While serving as CEO and chair of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Mawby was instrumental in convening a series of meetings leading to the formation of the Michigan Community Service Commission. He was appointed to this Commission in September 2000,



served as chair until May 2003, and is actively involved today.

Dr. Mawby's commitment to the nonprofit sector is demonstrated by his years of service as a member of countless nonprofit boards. He is a founder of the Council of Michigan Foundations and the Michigan Nonprofit Association.

The Russell G. Mawby Award for Philanthropy was established in 1995 upon Dr. Mawby's retirement

from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. This award, given to an individual who has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to encouraging private action for the public good, is presented at the Governor's Service Awards celebration.

Thank you Dr. Mawby for supporting the Signature Service Project. Your lifelong dedication to community service has touched countless lives, including those of Michigan's AmeriCorps members.



# Program List and Contact Information

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Superior AmeriCorps	Tracy Cleveland	(269) 926-8766 <a href="mailto:bgclubvol@parrett.net">bgclubvol@parrett.net</a>	<a href="http://www.volunteermuskegon.org">www.volunteermuskegon.org</a>
The Smart Choice Project	Lisa Schillaci	(231) 722-6600 x 15 <a href="mailto:americorps@volunteermuskegon.org">americorps@volunteermuskegon.org</a>	
Volunteer Muskegon's AmeriCorps			

## Michigan's AmeriCorps Member Council 2008

**Diana Alan**  
**Jamie Cianfarani**  
**Paul Jedele**  
**Kyna King**  
**Leslie Kingsley**  
**Raymond Murry**  
**Bonita "B" Neveau**  
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**Catherine Paul**



**Casey Ressler**  
**Stefanie Roderer**  
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**Nakia Vance**  
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**Executive Team:**  
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**Laura Schleede**